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## HARRIET MARTINEAU AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN 1836<sup>1</sup>

It is essential to any profitable discussion of women's work that the gainful employment of middle-class women be distinguished from the gainful employment of women of the working-classes. This is not so much an insistence on "class distinctions" in discussions of the woman question as it is a recognition of the fact that, while the problems which these two classes of women have been obliged to face may have a certain fundamental identity, they are as practical problems quite different. And a failure to see important points of unlikeness has led at times to confusion in theory and to unfortunate practical results. It is, for example, a part of the history of the struggle for factory legislation in England that an unwillingness to grant that the working-woman had peculiar grievances delayed the progress of very necessary reforms,<sup>2</sup> and it has followed from the resulting theoretical confusion that, in attempts to formulate the achievements of the long efforts of the last century to enlarge the opportunities and **activities of women**—efforts which to the German economist assume the importance of a *Bewegung*<sup>3</sup>—such progress as has been made is assumed to have been a progress without "class distinctions" in which working-women and professional women have shared alike. In the following brief study—a study in economic history and not in present conditions—an attempt is

<sup>1</sup> The writer is under obligations to the Department of Economics of the Carnegie Institution of Washington for the opportunity of making the investigation of which this is one of the results.

<sup>2</sup> In an interesting chapter on "The Woman's Rights Opposition," Miss Hutchins and Miss Harrison point out (*History of Factory Legislation*, pp. 183, 184) the difference between the "social and customary disabilities which have been placed on women's work in the professions . . . and the restraints placed by law on the over-work of women in industry. . . . Not exclusion but exploitation is the trouble here . . . [working-women] are not denied the opportunity of exercising their muscles as their better-off sisters were or are of exercising their brains."

<sup>3</sup> E. g., Conrad, *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaft*, Vol. III, pp. 564, 565.

made to present a more detailed account than has been given before of the industrial opportunities open to women seventy years ago. No list of the industries in which women were then engaged that can lay the smallest claim to completeness has been heretofore accessible, and it has been easy to be misled into believing that we are estopped from obtaining any such information for a period earlier than 1860.<sup>4</sup>

The most convenient and definite statement regarding the early employment of women is one made on the authority of Harriet Martineau, to the effect that, when she visited America in 1836, but seven occupations were open to women:<sup>5</sup> teaching, needlework, keeping boarders, work in cotton-mills, typesetting, bookbinding, and domestic service. Of these only four—work in cotton-mills, typesetting, needlework, and bookbinding—come within the present discussion of industrial occupations. It should be said at the outset, in fairness to Miss Martineau, that, although this is taken from a chapter<sup>6</sup> on the "Occupations of Women," it is a casual and not a carefully prepared enumeration. She does not herself even include domestic service, though she often refers to it; and she also mentions that in Lynn many of the women were engaged in binding and trimming shoes;<sup>7</sup> yet this occupation though a vastly more important one than bookbinding or typesetting, is not included in the list. It should be added, too, that she used the more general term "mills"<sup>8</sup> instead of "cotton-mills," which is used in the list as commonly quoted, and she may well have had in mind other textile factories in operation at that time.

<sup>4</sup> In Campbell's *Women Wage-Earners*, a prize monograph of the American Economic Association in 1891, it is said: "Defeat and discouragement attend well-nigh every step of the attempt to reach any conclusions regarding women workers in the early years of the century. . . . It is to the United States Census of 1860 that we must look for the first really definite statement as to the occupations of women and children" (pp. 95, 96). For a similar statement see Willett, *Women in the Clothing Trades*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Levasseur's *L'ouvrier américain*, Adams' Translation, p. 337, and Wright's *Industrial Evolution of the United States*, p. 202.

<sup>6</sup> Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (London, 1837), Vol. II, pp. 131-51.

<sup>7</sup> In a chapter on "Manufacturing Labor," *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 249, 250.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

Miss Martineau's casual statement<sup>9</sup> of the meager opportunities of employment for working-women in 1836 lends convenient color to vague and comforting generalizations regarding the multiplication of industrial openings for women that has come with our years of progress. No attempt will be made here to contradict these generalizations or to offer new ones. It is only hoped that more exact information regarding the earlier period may be useful as a trustworthy basis for future discussions.

Fortunately, valuable data for this early period are by no means so unobtainable as has been represented. There are three important sources of information for 1836 and the fifteen years preceding. One of these is the industrial census of Massachusetts<sup>10</sup> for 1836-37; another is a series of *Documents Relative to the Manufactures of the United States*,<sup>11</sup> collected in 1832 by the secretary of the treasury in compliance with an order of the House of Representatives; the third is the United States industrial census of 1822.<sup>12</sup> Of these the 1832 collection is unquestionably the most important. As a census of manufacturing industries it was a failure, and no attempt was made to tabulate the data or prepare a summary of the results. Save in the New England states, little information is given, except for a few leading industries like cotton, wool, glass, and iron; and even for these the returns are fragmentary. In 1822 the attempt to prepare a "digest" of the manufacturing industries had been similarly disappointing. Niles called it a "miserable exhibit" and said that "to bring forth a summary for general purposes of reference and remark we esteem as an impossibility and were

<sup>9</sup> Another casual statement easy to "quote" is found in the same chapter: "Wifely and motherly occupations may be called the sole business of woman there. . . . The only alternative . . . is making an occupation of either religion or dissipation." (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 245.)

<sup>10</sup> *Statistical Tables Exhibiting the Conditions and Products of Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts for the Year Ending April 1, 1837* (Boston, 1838).

<sup>11</sup> *Executive Documents*, Twenty-second Congress, First Session, Vols. I, II.

<sup>12</sup> *Digest of the Manufacturing Establishments in the United States*, issued as an additional volume of the *Fourth Census* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1823); conveniently available in *American State Papers, Finance*, Vol. IV, pp. 28-224.

not therefore surprised that none is given."<sup>13</sup> For our purpose, however, these reports are extremely valuable, because the schedules called for the number of "men, women, and children," instead of the baffling "number of persons" employed. Frequently the designation in the schedules was disregarded and only the "number of employees" returned; but in a large proportion of cases it was faithfully observed. It is in just this respect that the Massachusetts census is disappointing; for, while it is, as a whole, much more accurate and complete than either of the government reports, the sex of the employees is less frequently distinguished.

From these three reports together, however unsatisfactory each may be alone, it is possible to obtain a very considerable amount of information regarding the employment of women during the fifteen years which they cover. The total number of women employed in all industries or in any one industry cannot be obtained from them. Neither can the list of occupations compiled be considered complete. But partial though it may be, it is deserving of attention, because it is so much more detailed than any that we now have.

It appears from these reports that prior to 1837 women were employed in more than one hundred different industrial occupations. In the *Documents* of 1832 the New Hampshire returns show that they were employed in the manufacture of brushes, bobbins, books, batting, cigars and snuff, gum, garden seeds, glass bottles, fur and wool hats,<sup>14</sup> leather and morocco leather, musical instruments, paper,<sup>15</sup> starch, straw hats, roots

<sup>13</sup> *Niles Register*, May 3, 1823. It is added that the secretary of state hesitated to publish the digest and did so only because it was required, and the House of Representatives "nearly resolved to destroy or suppress the books just as they came neatly done up from the binders."

<sup>14</sup> This was a very important industry at that time and an old one for this country. In 1831 it was estimated that 3,000 women were employed in the manufacture in various parts of the country. See the "Reports of Committees" in the *Address and Proceedings of the Friends of Domestic Industry at the New York Convention, October 26, 1831* (Baltimore, 1831), p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> The manufacture of paper had long furnished an occupation for women. Before 1789, women and girls were employed in paper-mills, and more than a thousand women and children were shown to have been employed in 1822

and herbs, tin-plating, wire, wheel-heads, whips; as well as in printing, tailoring, and cloth-dressing, and of course in cotton-and woolen-mills and in "boots and shoes."

The Connecticut investigation found women also employed<sup>16</sup> in brass foundries, in silversmith work, in the manufacture of buttons and combs,<sup>17</sup> cabinet-ware, coaches and wagons, caps, clocks, cotton-webbing and cotton-wicks, iron nails, jewelry,<sup>18</sup> line twine, metal-clasps,<sup>19</sup> razor strops, stone-ware, suspenders,<sup>20</sup> and pocket-books.

Putting together the returns in the census of 1837 and those in the *Documents* for Massachusetts, the list of industries is extended to include the manufacture of boxes, bed-cords and clothes-lines, blacking, children's carriages, cards, chocolate, cordage and twine, candles and soap, cork-cutters, cigars<sup>21</sup> and tobacco, chairs,<sup>22</sup> chair stuff, crackers, carpets, curtains, cheese, and butter, copperas, furs, furniture, flax, flint glass, fishing-nets, gimlets, hair cloth and hair beds, hosiery, hooks and eyes, india-rubber, lead, lead pencils, lace,<sup>23</sup> letter-boxes, locks, look- (*Digest of 1822*, and Bishop's *History of Manufactures*, Vol. II, p. 207). About 1825, paper began to be made by the use of the Fourdernier machine, and the most extensive manufactory was said to have been at Springfield, Mass., "employing twelve engines, more than 100 females besides the usual number of male hands" (Bishop, *op. cit.*, p. 303). The "census" of 1837 showed 605 women in the paper-mills of Massachusetts.

<sup>16</sup> Industries that were on the New Hampshire list are of course not repeated.

<sup>17</sup> An important industry in Connecticut and Massachusetts, employing nearly a thousand women.

<sup>18</sup> The manufacture of jewelry was more important in Rhode Island, where 122 women were employed.

<sup>19</sup> A New Britain industry, which employed 157 women.

<sup>20</sup> The manufacture of stocks and suspenders in the two states of Connecticut and Massachusetts gave employment to more than 700 women.

<sup>21</sup> The *Documents* showed 230 women in cigar-making for Massachusetts, but undoubtedly a complete investigation would have showed many more in the industry.

<sup>22</sup> According to the returns, *ibid.*, 219 women were employed in chair factories.

<sup>23</sup> Lace-making was an important "woman's industry" at this time. The *Documents* returned more than 500 women engaged in it in Massachusetts; and it was said to be extensively carried on elsewhere, employing 600 women in Newport, R. I. (See the *Report of the Harrisburg Convention in the Interests of Domestic Industry*, a pamphlet published in 1827.)

ing-glasses, paper hangings, pails, rakes, stocks, tacks, types, thread and sewing silk, umbrellas, window blinds; and they were also engaged in millinery,<sup>24</sup> tailoring and mantua-making, making of instruments, wool-pulling, gold-beating, silk- and wool-dyeing, lithographing, bed-binding, and upholstering; and women were employed as silversmiths and in publishing houses.<sup>25</sup>

Returns from other states were not detailed enough to add any other industries to this list, which would have been greatly extended if returns from New York had even approached in completeness those from Massachusetts. The *Digest* of 1822, while not so complete for any one section as that of 1832 was for Massachusetts, covers the whole country more evenly, and therefore increases the variety of industries which had women employees during this period. The list<sup>26</sup> for 1822 shows that women were employed in the manufacture of *anchors, beer, brass nails, books, barrels, boats, button-molds, buttons, brushes, bar-iron, bagging (hemp), bakery products, beds, boots and shoes, candles and soap, coaches, cheese, combs, cigars, cotton cloths, cordage and twine, chairs, clocks, cards, cooper's ware, clothing, carts, earthen-ware, furniture, flour, floor-cloth, gloves, gold-leaf, gunpowder, gunstocks, fur and wool hats, hardware, iron castings, iron work, iron (bar), iron (pig), iron (rolled), leather, lace, lumber, machinery, maple sugar, morocco leather, medicines, millstones, oil (flaxseed), paper, plow-line and ropes, salt, saddles, saddletrees, stoves, straw hats, shovels, silver- and gold-ware, saltpeter, tin-ware, tobacco and snuff, types, woollen goods, yarn, whips, whiskey and gin.*

<sup>24</sup> It was estimated that 60 milliners employed 420 women at \$0.75 a day in Boston (*Documents*, Vol. I, p. 451). The enumerator commented in a rather caustic vein: "This class of manufacturers it has been found difficult to estimate as women are not generally accountants and therefore it is not easy for them to answer the questions proposed. Many of them decline giving any answer apparently from the apprehension that their statements may be considered absurd. Others refuse for the usual woman's reason *because*. The estimate is believed to be rather within the actual amount than to exceed it."

<sup>25</sup> More than 300 women in Boston were engaged in bookbinding or in other work for "booksellers and publishers."

<sup>26</sup> The complete list is given here, and all industries which have not already been enumerated are italicized.

The exact number of industries in these lists would be hard to estimate fairly, as some of the expressions used are clearly redundant. Other industries, it has been found, might have been added if the newspapers of the time had also been used as sources of information. It seemed better, however, for many reasons, to confine the discussion within the limits of the three official reports. Using these, all that seems to be possible in the way of a fair summary is to repeat what has already been said—that more than one hundred industrial occupations were open to women at this time. Of all these, needlework or tailoring, binding shoes, making straw hats, and work in the cotton- and woollen-mills were by far the most important.<sup>27</sup> A brief statement of the number of women employed in these industries, so far as these numbers are ascertainable, may perhaps be useful.

Work in the cotton-mills, where women were employed as spinners, weavers, carders, and dressers,<sup>28</sup> and where young girls worked as doffers,<sup>29</sup> employed 38,927 women in 1831.<sup>30</sup> This was 75 out of every 10,000 women in the United States over ten years of age, and 455 out of every such 10,000 in Massachusetts.<sup>31</sup> To understand the significance of these figures the number of women gainfully employed or industrially employed out of every 10,000 should also be given, but this unfortunately cannot be estimated with accuracy from existing data. In 1850, however, 283.2 women out of every 10,000 were engaged in industrial

<sup>27</sup> Work in paper-mills, and the manufacture of fur and wool hats, perhaps belong here. It has already been noted *supra* that both occupations were very important. It is significant, too, that two of the four occupations enumerated by Miss Martineau—viz., bookbinding and typesetting—are not included.

<sup>28</sup> *Tenth Census*, Vol. II, p. 44, Wright's "Report on The Factory System."

<sup>29</sup> Lucy Larcom worked as a doffer in the "Laurence Mills" at Lowell when she was eleven years old. See her *New England Girlhood* (p. 10).

<sup>30</sup> Statistics from the report of the Committee on Cotton Manufactures for the *Proceedings, etc.*, *New York Convention of the Friends of Domestic Industry*, *op. cit.* This committee's estimate was accepted as a reliable one, but at least thirty establishments in the South and West were said to have been omitted. The estimate is, of course, exclusive of household manufactures.

<sup>31</sup> Nearly one-third (10,678) of the women in cotton-mills were in Massachusetts.



pursuits,<sup>32</sup> and, if only a very slight increase were allowed for, it would be safe to say that one-third of the women in industry in 1831 were in the cotton-mills. Work in the woolen-mills, while very general throughout the country, was much less important. No trustworthy estimate of the number of women employed in them can be given except for Massachusetts, where there were 3,485 in 1837.<sup>33</sup> The household manufacture of wool was still very important, and it was said that the proportion between the amount of the raw material used in factories and in home industry was as three to two.<sup>34</sup> The proportion which women formed of the total number of employees was smaller for woolen- than for cotton-mills.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps second in importance as an occupation for women was binding shoes. This was long before the days of the sewing-machine, and the work was done by the women in their own homes, and of course by hand.<sup>36</sup> As early as 1810 it was reported that the women binders of Lynn had earned \$50,000 in the course of the year.<sup>37</sup> By 1837 shoe-binding in Massachusetts was numerically a more important occupation for women than employ-

<sup>32</sup> The number of women employed in the various manufacturing industries was not tabulated for publication in the census of 1850, but is given in a separate "Abstract of the Statistics of Manufactures according to the Returns of the Seventh Census," published in 1858, *Senate Documents*, Thirty-fifth Congress, Second Session, Vol. X.

<sup>33</sup> *Tables of Industry*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>34</sup> *Proceedings of New York Convention*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>35</sup> This statement is also true of present conditions. In 1827 a prominent manufacturer of Troy wrote: "The wool business requires more man labor, and this we study to avoid. Women are much more ready to follow good regulations and are not captious and do not clan as the men do against their overseers." (*White's Life of Slater*, pp. 131, 132.)

<sup>36</sup> Lucy Larcom in one of her early poems has made us familiar with this work in her picture of

Poor lone Hannah  
Sitting at the window, binding shoes;  
Faded, wrinkled,  
Sitting stitching in a mournful muse,  
. . . . .

Spring and winter,  
Night and morning,  
Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.

<sup>37</sup> Hurd, *History of Essex County*, Vol. I, p. 284.

ment in the cotton-mills, but in reality it was not so. Women who were cotton-mill operatives worked regularly and systematically for wages that were frequently more than \$2.50 a week and occasionally as high as \$10.<sup>38</sup> Binding shoes was a household occupation. A large proportion of the 15,000 women reported to be engaged in it<sup>39</sup> worked only in the interval of other duties, and their earnings were correspondingly small.<sup>40</sup> A good many of them, to be sure, did earn 33 or 40 cents a day, but 50 or 60 cents was probably the maximum; so the possibilities were very limited.

Making straw braid and bonnets and palm-leaf hats was another occupation numerically very important. Data in the *Documents* of 1832 seem to justify an estimate of 18,000 women pretty regularly employed in this sort of work.<sup>41</sup> But we are dealing again with a household occupation,<sup>42</sup> and, while many of the returns report only the number constantly employed or an equivalent, others are obviously very loose statements, and the total undoubtedly includes a good many women whose work was only casual.<sup>43</sup> But after all possible allowance has been made

<sup>38</sup> Mrs. Robinson, in her interesting book of reminiscences, *Loom and Spindle*, p. 17, says that many of the Lowell girls earned from \$6 to \$10 a week. Comment on this statement involves a careful examination of wages in the cotton-mills, and is reserved for a subsequent study of women's wages.

<sup>39</sup> *Tables of Industry in Massachusetts*.

<sup>40</sup> This was particularly true of fishing villages like Marblehead, where shoe-making was a winter occupation for fishermen. Frequently their wives averaged only 12, and occasionally only 8 or 9, cents a day.

<sup>41</sup> In the pamphlet before referred to, *Report of the Harrisburg Convention in the Interests of Domestic Industry* (1827), the statement is made that "25,000 persons (nearly all females) make straw hats, etc., in Massachusetts."

<sup>42</sup> It was by no means exclusively a home industry. Some establishments, like that of Messrs. Montague in Boston, "constantly employed 300 females and 150-200 looms in weaving "material for bonnets made of silk warp and a filling of imported Tuscan straw." (Bishop, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 393.)

<sup>43</sup> The following note from the *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 426, is typical of many reports which failed to indicate the number of women employed in this work: "Considerable straw is braided in this town, say to \$15,000, done by women and young girls, and it is very difficult to obtain any very accurate account of it or of the number of persons employed in it. It is not a constant or regular business, but more or less of it is done in almost every family occasionally and

for casual employment the occupation remains a very important one.<sup>44</sup> In 1830 the annual value of the product was more than a million and a half dollars.<sup>45</sup> Bonnets were made from rye by women in Baxford, Mass., and sold in the cities at from ten to fourteen dollars each, the cost being only two or three.<sup>46</sup> By 1837 the value of the palm-leaf hats and straw bonnets made in Massachusetts alone was estimated at nearly two million dollars.<sup>47</sup> The industry was not an old one. The manufacture of palm-leaf hats began in 1826, but in 1824 a school was established at Baltimore "for the instruction of poor girls in the various branches of straw-plaiting from simple plait to finished bonnet,"<sup>48</sup> and some years before this the manufacture had begun to attract some attention.<sup>49</sup>

It would be futile to attempt to find a statistical expression for women's work in the needle trades. The seamstress is a difficult statistical proposition at any time, and quite an impossible one in the early years. The "ready-made" had begun to be manufactured on a considerable scale in 1832.<sup>50</sup> The duty of 1816 (30 per cent.) on ready-made clothing was raised to 50

by part only of the day, week, month, or year, when not occupied in household and family cares. Boot and shoe and cabinet businesses are like straw."

"At one of the Philadelphia meetings the following occurs among the reasons for opposing the tariff bill: "Because it injures the manufacture of hats, caps, and bonnets, and destroys a large amount of labor generally considered a clear gain to the country, namely, that of females which in these articles alone produces an annual value of nearly \$3,000,000" (*Niles Register*, Vol. XLII, p. 277).

<sup>45</sup> Bishop, *History of Manufactures*, Vol. II, pp. 258, 270, 348.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Fine straw and grass bonnets in imitation of Leghorn "often sold for \$30 to \$40 apiece" (*ibid.*, p. 285).

<sup>47</sup> *Tables of Industry*, p. 181.

<sup>48</sup> Bishop, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 294.

<sup>49</sup> As early as 1821 a Connecticut woman received from the London Society of Arts a silver medal for her samples of a new material of straw plait, and 20 guineas "on condition that she would put the society in possession of some of the seed and the process of bleaching with a description of the whole treatment of culm." (*Ibid.*, p. 270.)

<sup>50</sup> To quote from the *Documents* again, we find 300 men, 100 children, and 1,300 women employed in tailor-shops in Boston in 1831. It is said with reference to the Boston statistics: "The estimate of the tailoring business is founded on the best information which could be obtained. It has become usual of late years for most tailors to keep on hand a large stock of ready-made clothing."

per cent. in 1828, and imports fell off nearly one-third in the next six years.<sup>51</sup> There were a few establishments in New York and other important cities at that time—some of which employed from 300 to 500 hands—which manufactured clothing for shipment to the southern states and to some foreign parts.<sup>52</sup> In 1837 nearly 2,500 women in Boston were engaged in making clothing, and in Groton 11,000 garments were produced annually, employing 3 men and 245 women.<sup>53</sup> The list of prices paid by the clothiers of Baltimore for various grades of needle-work includes the price for fifty-six different articles, such as ladies' cloaks and men's and boys' clothing, most of which were evidently kept in stock and sold "ready-made."<sup>54</sup> The manufacture of clothing for the army in these ante-sewing-machine days also gave employment to a large number of women, but prices for this work were so low that the secretary of war was appealed to in 1829 by some influential citizens of Philadelphia in behalf of the 400 "industrious females" of that city who were engaged in this poorly paid work.<sup>55</sup> Matthew Carey estimated on the most careful inquiries . . . that the number of women in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore whose sole dependence is on their industry amounts to from 18 to 20 thousand . . . of these one-third are tayleresses, milliners, mantua-makers, colourists, attendants in shops, seamstresses who work in families, nurses, whitewashers, etc., who are in general tolerably well paid. The remainder are seamstresses who take in work at their own lodgings, spoolers, shoe-binders, etc.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See the account of the clothing industry in the *Eighth Census, Manufactures*, p. lxiii.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Tables of Industry*, p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> *Journal of the American Institute*, Vol. I, pp. 145, 146. It is added: "The prices in many other of our cities are much the same."

<sup>55</sup> The secretary replied that, while the government did not wish to oppress the "indigent but meritorious females" employed in its service, yet, he said, "the subject is found to be one of so much delicacy and is so intimately connected with the manufacturing interests and the general prices of this kind of labor in the city of Philadelphia that the Department has not felt at liberty to interfere farther than to address a letter to the Commissary General of Purchase." (Quoted in an essay on the "Public Charities of Philadelphia," by Matthew Carey in *Miscellaneous Pamphlets*, collected April, 1831, by M. Carey.

<sup>56</sup> An open letter "To the Ladies Who Have Undertaken to Establish a House of Industry in New York," M. Carey, *Miscellaneous Pamphlets*, *op. cit.*

The sewing trades, whether in ready-made or custom work, seem to have been seventy-five years ago, as they are today, numerically the most important occupation, as well as the last hope and degradation of the woman wage-earner.

In concluding this fragmentary study, it should be emphasized that its purpose has not been to describe the condition of the working-woman in the thirties, or to compare her situation then with that of today. It has not even been attempted to compare the field of employment then and now. But it should, perhaps, be said that, while a large proportion of the enumerated occupations employed only a very few women and were relatively unimportant, the same comment may be made upon the long list of women's occupations today. The last census, for example, showed that women were carpenters, masons, miners, blacksmiths, "quarrymen," and the like, which obviously means little when the real field of employment is considered. There is, moreover, great need that this field should have been widened. The female population over ten years of age has increased from 234,654 in 1830 to 1,343,905 in 1900—nearly fivefold. No positive statement can be made as to whether the number of women who are competing for industrial employment, out of every one hundred of this population, has increased or not. But even had there been no change—which is, of course, highly improbable—the need of new occupations would still exist, unless the old ones had become five times as important; and there are good reasons for supposing that this has not been the case.<sup>57</sup>

Any attempt to present the conditions or the statistics of women's employment in 1836 must be disclaimed. The purpose of the present note has been merely to call attention to the fact that the field of employment for women in industry was broader at that time than is generally supposed; so much broader, in fact, that one is bound to question whether the world has changed as much for the working-class woman in the last seventy-five years as it has, for example, for women in educational or professional work. Miss Martineau wrote then, in the *Society in America*:

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of this point see the October, 1906, number of this *Journal*, on the "History of the Industrial Employment of Women, etc."

One consequence, mournful and injurious, of the "chivalrous" taste and temper of a country with regard to its women is that it is difficult where it is not impossible for women to earn their bread. Where it is a boast that women do not labor the encouragement and rewards of labor are not provided. It is so in America. In some parts there are now so many women dependent on their exertions that the evil will give way before the force of circumstances. In the meantime the lot of the poor women is sad.

How far Miss Martineau's comments were true then, and how far they are still true, would be perhaps a matter of opinion. But one could not go far wrong in saying that the lot of the poor woman is still sad. Opportunity of employment is scarce now as it was then.<sup>58</sup> The sewing trades are still demoralized, and women's wages are still low. Now as then working-women are unorganized and exploited, and they still live, as they always have lived, in "ways known only to the poor."

EDITH ABBOTT

WASHINGTON, D. C.

<sup>58</sup> Among the replies from manufacturers in the *Documents* of 1831 is a letter from Smith Wilkinson, who is remembered because of his early association with Samuel Slater. An extract from this letter, written as he said, out of his twenty-five years' experience is worth quoting, not as a typical but as an interesting statement: "Our greatest difficulty at present is a want of females—women and children—and from the great number of factories now building, have my fears that we shall not be able to operate all our machinery another year."